



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Interview With Jill Dougherty of CNN

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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(10:15 a.m. Local)

MS. DOUGHERTY: Thanks very much for speaking with CNN, Madame Secretary. I'd like to begin with President Putin. You'll be meeting with him in a few hours. The U.S. obviously at this point does have concerns about his leadership. You, yourself, have mentioned the concentration of power in his hands, the elimination of independent voices in the media. At the beginning of the relationship with President Bush, President Bush said that this is a man that he could trust. Now, what happened? Did he mislead President Bush, or did President Bush misread him?

SECRETARY RICE: I have no doubt that President Putin believes that he is doing what is best for his country. What you can trust him to do is, he's a patriot and he wants to do what's best for the country. I think our goal has been to seek to persuade him that a strong and vibrant and vital Russia in the 21st century cannot be founded on a state that is so centralized, that does not permit alternative voices in the media, because Russia's greatness is really in its people. This is a place that should be leading in terms of creativity, in terms of economic development. And it can only do so if its people are free to take full advantage of their talents.

And so when we have these discussions, they're not in an accusatory way; they're not through a sense of criticism but, rather, to try and talk about why democratic progress is so linked to Russia's future development as well as to the development of U.S.-Russia relations.

MS. DOUGHERTY: President Bush has made the spread of freedom and democracy the central core of his foreign policy. And already, we have seen three revolutions in this part of the world: Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Is the United States prepared to support revolutions in other parts of the former Soviet Union, specifically in Belarus or maybe even here in Russia?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we're certainly willing and the President has been very clear that we want to support the aspirations of people for democratic development. And it was really quite heartening to see what happened in Georgia and Ukraine and now in Kyrgyzstan. These are not easy roads to democratic development and one thing that we have to remember is that once these upheavals take place, we still have a responsibility to these young democracies to help them develop and to help them begin to deliver for their people. So we've been very focused on that.

But I would hope that particularly in Belarus -- which is really the last remaining true dictatorship in the heart of Europe -- that you would begin to see some democratic development. There are organizations there and civil society groups that are crying out for the rest of the world to acknowledge them and to give them a place to make a home so that they can go back and do something for the people of Belarus.

So, yes, we are continuing to work to promote democratic development. The President has insisted that through our efforts with nongovernmental organizations and civil society that we do that. And I think that we're making some progress.

MS. DOUGHERTY: But couldn't that be interpreted by some as fomenting revolution?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think fomenting revolution is -- first of all, if it brings about democratic progress, why is it a bad thing for people to throw off the yoke of tyranny and decide that they want to control their own futures. We, in America, of course, more than any people recognize that those individual liberties and rights are hard won, that democratic progress is uneven and difficult. But you have to start someplace. And for people to decide that it is time to take responsibility for their lives into their own hands is a good thing.

MS. DOUGHERTY: Let's talk about John Bolton. His nomination to the U.N. looks as if it's running into some problems. You obviously believe that he is the best candidate. But is there any concern on your part about the allegations of his abusive management?

SECRETARY RICE: I know many people who work for John Bolton are intensely loyal to him, have enjoyed working with him. I, myself, have worked with John Bolton. This is an intelligent, committed person who has been a public servant several times in his career. And he will make a very fine ambassador to the United Nations.

Case 1:04-cv-01482-GMS Document 84-6 Filed 05/31/2005 Page 2 of 2

I would sincerely hope that, with all due respect to the deliberative processes of the Senate, and the role of advice and consent, I would certainly hope that this would be brought soon to conclusion. The President deserves to have the person at the United Nations that he thinks best to carry out this job. I think we make a mistake if suddenly comments about management style become part of the confirmation process. John has talked about his work. He has talked about what he would try to do at the United Nations. He has been through many, many discussions of policy. John will be an excellent U.N. ambassador. But we need a U.N. ambassador. The U.N. reform process is continuing, those discussions are going on, and we need to be an active leader in that. And without a permanent representative at the United Nations, we are at a severe disadvantage.

MS. DOUGHERTY: The dismantlement of Yukos Oil Company and the trial of Khodorkovsky, which has already wrapped up, and now the sentencing will be literally in a week, overall what kind of effect has that process had on investment climate in Russia and also relations between the two countries?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think there's any doubt that the Khodorkovsky affair and Yukos have raised significant concerns in the investor community and in political circles about the role of rule of law and an independent judiciary in Russia. It is all the more reason that everyone is watching very closely for confirmation in the next week that this is a process that has indeed been carried out through rule of law. And I would hope that Russia recognizes that this is something that people are watching very carefully and it is going to have a tremendous impact on how both the investment climate and Russia's political future are viewed in the international community.

MS. DOUGHERTY: The United States has expressed some concern about Russian arms sales. Just conventional arms. And at this point, you have Russia selling arms to China. And some have speculated that if tensions were to increase with Taiwan and Taiwan declares independence, China perhaps invades, that these weapons could be a complication, a very complicating factor in that. Is the United States concerned about that, specifically Russian sales to China? Is the United States saying anything about it? What should be done?

SECRETARY RICE: We certainly are concerned about any efforts or any policies that lead to increased Chinese military capability in the Asia Pacific region. And Taiwan is obviously an issue here, because the United States has certain responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act to help Taiwan defend itself if it's attacked. We have talked to the Russians about it. We've talked especially about the need to recognize the balance of power issues, the balance of forces issues in the Asia Pacific region. And I might just note that Russia itself, of course, is a Pacific power and should have similar concerns about what could happen to the military balance in the region if Chinese military modernization continues apace.

MS. DOUGHERTY: Could we return to Russia and its relationship with the rest of this region, the post-Soviet region? Why is it that other countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union seem to have such fear, apprehension, concern about Russia's behavior in this part of the world?

SECRETARY RICE: This is a matter of history, of course. Jill, you know this area very, very well. And going all the way back into the 19th century and in some cases even before, Russia had an imperial past in this part of the world and, of course, the Soviet Union had an imperial past in this part of the world, the states now that constitute Russia's neighbors. It's even more the reason that for Russia the future is in developing transparent, neighborly, friendly relations with these states that are based on a kind of 21st century premise, not a 19th century premise. And the 21st century premise is that no one controls anyone; that client states belong to another era; that what you're talking about now is developing close economic ties -- and these states will have close economic ties with Russia, but economic ties that are mutually beneficial and do not try to use economic leverage to elicit certain kinds of behavior. It will also require cultural and political ties that are very deep. Over many years, populations have gone back and forth, and that's a positive development.

But the Russian government, I would hope, would treat these states as equals in the international system, as truly independent states. And the states, I believe, want good relations with Russia because they understand fundamentally that they need to have good relations with Russia.

We in the United States do not believe that it is a zero sum game in this area. We can have good relations with Georgia or Ukraine or the Baltic states and so can Russia. That's a 21st century view of how interstate relations should operate.

MS. DOUGHERTY: Thank you very much, Madame Secretary.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you.
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